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THE POLITICAL CONDITION OF CHINA

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In order to understand the political condition of China it will be necessary to know something of the persons and forces that brought it about.

In 1898 the late Emperor Kuang Hsü, inspired by the study of a New Testament, sent to the Empress Dowager by the Christian women of China, and by the study of all the books translated out of European languages into the Chinese, sent to him by the writer and others, began issuing a remarkable series of reform edicts, ordering the establishment of boards of railroads, of mines, of education, etc., and dismissing various conservative officials, and disbanding various useless boards that were an encumbrance to the government.

About this same time Germany took the part of Kiaochow with fifty miles of the surrounding territory, Russia took Port Arthur and Ta-lien-wan, England took Wei Hai Wei, and France took Kwang Chou Wan, while Italy demanded San Men. The dismissed officials went to the Empress Dowager and plead with her to return to power, which when the Emperor heard, he called Yuan Shih-K'ai to Peking and ordered him to dispose of Jung Lu, the conservative governor general of the province of Chihli and his superior officer, and to bring his troops to Peking, surround the summer palace and keep the Empress Dowager a prisoner.

Instead of doing this, which he rightly supposed would bring about a revolution, Yuan returned to Tientsin, showed the order to Jung Lu and asked for his instructions.

Jung Lu bade him attend to his duties in the army while he took the order and sped to Peking, and with Prince Ching went to the summer palace, and like the dismissed officials plead with the Empress Dowager to take control of affairs. This she did, ordering that no more Chinese territory should be "leased" to the foreigners, and

privately instructing her viceroys and governors to resist all attempts at incursion.

The governor of Shantung, in which Kaichou is located, then organized the Boxer society in hopes in this way to resist the foreigners, and though at their request he was removed from the governorship of Shantung, he was sent at once to a similar post in Shansi, and Yuan was ordered to take his place in Shantung.

The Boxer leaders at once called on Yuan to see if he was of the same metal as Yü Hsien, his predecessor, telling him that they were proof against the swords, spears and bullets of the foreigners. Yuan dined them and listened patiently to all they had to say, and then invited them to dine with him and several of his official friends in the near future. At his second dinner he directed the conversation to the wonderful powers of the Boxers and led them to tell his friends what they had already told him, and after feeding them well, and entertaining and being entertained by them, he requested them to give an exhibition of their powers to his official friends, and lining them up in the court he called out some of his troops and shot them all down.

The Empress Dowager, knowing nothing of this, when asked to throw her lot in with the Boxer movement, called a meeting of the princes whom she asked to decide the matter. Prince Tuan, whose son she had selected as heir to the throne, heartily favored the Boxers while Prince Su as bitterly opposed them. When Prince Ching was asked for his opinion he said:

My advice would be against it, but if your Majesty decides to cast in your lot with the Boxers we will do all we can to help you.

The failure of the Boxer movement is a matter of history, Prince Tuan was beheaded and his son was set aside and the Empress Dowager found it necessary to select another heir to the throne. The lady to whom Prince Chün, the present regent, was engaged took her life during the Boxer uprising to prevent falling into the hands of the allies, and the Empress Dowager engaged him to the daughter of Jung Lu, already mentioned, promising that his son should be heir to the throne.

An heir was soon born, and the Empress Dowager now began educating Prince Chün for the regency during his son's minority. To this end she sent him to Germany to apologize for the murder of Baron Von Kettler, thus giving him a trip to Europe and an opportunity to see the world. When he was about to start I had a round fan made for

him at his request, with the western hemisphere in one side and the eastern on the other on which were marked the route he was to take and the places he was to stop on the journey.

Both before and after this trip he was kept in constant association with the members of the diplomatic service, dining at the legations, attending the dedicatory services of their new buildings, pouring the sacrificial wine at the dedication of the Von Kettler monument (which the Chinese say was erected in memory of the man who murdered Von Kettler), and in every way learning what he could of the foreigners in Peking, and the ways of the world. I have dined with him at the American legation and have met him, and conversed with him on various occasions, and have no hesitation in saying that he is a man of unusual intelligence, of wide experience, and strength of character, and is extremely diplomatic in all he says.

There was one phase of foreign life and influence in China with which he was not familiar—I refer to the missionaries and their work. It seemed as if the Empress Dowager was anxious to have him meet all classes, and make himself familiar with all the forces that were then working in China.

Dr. Hopkins, of Massachusetts, had tried for twenty years to secure from his board a hospital for Peking, and had failed because the treasury was empty. After the Boxers, in 1890, had burned his old hospital to the ground, he returned to America, consulted with his brother and his brother-in-law, Captain Baker of Boston, and the three subscribed \$10,000 for the erection of a hospital in Peking. Dr. Hopkins returned to China, drew the plans, superintended the building of the hospital, and when it was completed, presented it to the mission.

When this matter reached the ears of the Empress Dowager she appointed Prince Chün to be present at the dedication of the building, and he expressed himself as highly gratified with the benevolence which prompted Dr. Hopkins to give not only his money but his services as well for the healing of the sick in China.

A year or two thereafter several of the missions in North China decided to unite in the erection of a large union medical college in Peking. The Empress Dowager became deeply interested in foreign medicine, and while she never called in a foreign physician for herself, she had them come to treat the head eunuch as well as others of the palace. When she was told of this proposed union medical college she subscribed 11,000 *taels* equal to \$9,000 toward the erection of the

building. The great officials of Peking subscribed liberally, and when the building was completed she again sent Prince Chün to be present at its dedication.

Prince Chün has therefore had advantages which have never yet been the heritage of an occupant of the dragon throne. He has seen the world as but few even of his people or officials have seen it. He knows a good deal of the governments of Europe. He is acquainted with the life of the legations in the Capital. He has had business dealings with Europeans in Peking. He is a brother of the former Emperor, a nephew of the Empress Dowager, and the son-in-law of Jung Lu, one of the greatest conservative officials. He is familiar with the aims of Christian missions and knows a good deal of their practical work. He has seen the new education growing up about him and the old system pass away, and we are told that he is now tearing away the fifteen thousand stalls that constituted the old examination hall, covering some ten acres in the east side of Peking and that he proposes to erect thereon two new parliament buildings to be ready for the work of the new constitution that the Empress Dowager designed should be given to the people. There is, therefore, every reason to hope that the government of China is safe in the hands of such an able and progressive young man as Prince Chün, the present regent of the empire.

DISCUSSION

Prof. A. C. Coolidge, of Harvard, commented on some of the new lessons that the United States has had to learn in the Far East. He pointed out that we are meeting other nations on an equal footing in a way that we never have before, without the special advantages which we have enjoyed in most of our dealings. We have to take part in the solving of certain general questions; for instance, that of the proper treatment of Asiatic dependencies, where, however different may be the circumstances the fundamental questions are often the same, whether in the Philippines, Korea, Java, or Annam. He also spoke of the fact that we have to be more careful in certain particulars than we have sometimes been before; for instance, in the politeness of our manners towards other nations. The Japanese immigration question has shown that we have not a monopoly of yellow journalism, and the Chinese boycott has opened our eyes to the fact that we cannot count indefinitely on treating Chinese in their own country in one way and in ours in another.